

# Soldiers bond with veterans at Perry Point Antique Car Cruise

Story by  
**HEATHER TASSMER**  
APG News

Soldiers from Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course classes 27-07 and 28-07 spent quality time with veterans during the fifth-annual Perry Point Veterans Affairs Medical Center's Antique Car Cruise June 10.

About 35 Soldiers escorted veterans from the nursing home care units to the car cruise where they saw various antique cars including corvettes and camaros. They also listened to nostalgic music from the '50s provided by disc jockey Mario Rocco.

In addition to bonding with veterans, the Soldiers showed off some dance moves to songs such as "My Girl" by The Temptations and "Stayin' Alive" by The BeeGees. They also took part in The Electric Slide and the Chicken Dance.

Staff Sgt. Sara George, senior small group leader said this is the fourth or fifth year BNCOC students have attended the car cruise.

"This is a good chance for us to give back to the veterans," George said. "They have already done so much for us."

"This is a new experience for us," said Staff Sgt. Pablo Pena, adding that attending the event was beneficial for both the Soldiers and the veterans.

"This is a way of giving back to the veterans and is good for us because we can learn from them. They have a lot of stories to tell and can share their experiences with us," Pena said.

The veterans said they had fun as well.

"This is a very good event," said Melvin Topa, a hospitalized veteran from one of the nursing home care units. "I like seeing the cars every year."

Ginny Stephan of Pasadena, Md., came up with the idea for the car show five years ago in remembrance of her father, Saverio Anthony Fiore, who served in the Army for 30 years.

"I wanted to do something to honor him and honor the military," she said.

With the help of Nancy McLaughlin, Diversional Activities coordinator for Recreation Therapy who orga-



Photos by HEATHER TASSMER  
Staff Sgt. Pablo Pena participates in the Chicken Dance.

nized the event, and many donations from various organizations, the residents can experience nostalgia and socialize with attendees.

McLaughlin said that last year 1,000 people attended the car show and about 600 people attended this year.

"This is a wonderful event for the vets," she said. "It brings back good memories for them."

McLaughlin also thanked the Soldiers for helping the veterans.

"I don't know what we would do without them," she said. "Many of our nursing home care residents were provided the opportunity to attend this special event because of the additional escort support provided by the Soldiers from APG."

"Through the generous donations of the car clubs, community and veterans service organizations, attendees were treated to hot dogs, hamburgers and beverages," said



Photo by TONY FINLAY, MEDICAL MEDIA PRODUCTION SERVICE, PERRY POINT VA MEDICAL CENTER  
Staff Sgt. Suzanne Clark, Basic Noncommissioned Officers Course, and Helen McLaughlin, hospitalized veteran on Ward 9A, Perry Point VA Medical Center, stop to take a look at one of the more than 150 cars during the June 10 Antique Car Cruise at the facility. McLaughlin and Clark joined more than 400 fellow veterans, community volunteers and employees who had the opportunity to chat with the antique car owners and gain information about the unique designs and history of each vehicle.

Margaret Hornberger, community resources development specialist, Office of Public and Community Relations

Point VAMC.

In addition, she said, the car clubs are wonderful because they allow attendees to sit in and touch the cars.

Maryland car clubs that participated in the event were Bel Air Corvette Club; Lost in the '50s, Glen Burnie; Free State Corvette Club, Ocean City and Chesapeake Corvette Club, Baltimore.

Clubs from Delaware and Pennsylvania also showcased antique cars.

The Maryland clubs donated \$750 to the medical center, she said.

"This is the kind of event we like to do," said Mike Weil, president of the Bel Air Corvette Club. "It allows us to give something back to veterans. A lot of our members are veterans, and we truly believe in these events."

Members of the club distributed the refreshments for the car cruise, Weil said.



From left, Staff Sgt. Sara George, senior small group leader for the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course, and BNCOC students, Staff Sgts. Pablo Pena, Ricardo Vargas and Diya Shakoor, let loose in a dance line.



Staff Sgt. Gerald Sewell shows off some disco-era moves to "Stayin' Alive" during a dance competition.



Staff Sgt. Pablo Pena and Staff Sgt. Ricardo Vargas check out a Pontiac during the Antique Car Cruise.



This 1968 Camaro covered with patriotic designs belongs to Will and Betty Hilditch of Pasadena. Will, a Vietnam veteran, designed the Camaro in honor of those who sacrificed their lives for the nation. The patriotic theme continues underneath the hood with a Soldier statue and American and British flags.